

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 497

INFO AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMCONSUL LAHORE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 6655

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, PK, AF, IR

SUBJ: IMPLICATIONS OF ARREST OF POLITICAL OPPOSITION
IN BALUCHISTAN

REF: ISLAMABAD 6587

SUMMARY: ARREST OF OPPOSITION NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY
BALUCHISTAN LEADERS PROBABLY STEMMED FROM MIX OF
DOMESTIC POLITICAL AND EXTERNAL CONSIDERATIONS. TIMING
OF ARRESTS SUGGESTS THAT ACTION TAKEN IN PART TO PREEMPT
CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE CAMPAIGN WHICH OPPOSITION HAS SAID
WOULD BEGIN AUGUST 24. REACTIONS OF BALUCH TRIBES,
PATHAN WING OF NAP, AND DAUD GOVT TO THIS DEVELOPMENT WILL
DETERMINE WHETHER BHUTTO HAS ACHIEVED ANOTHER TACTICAL
SHORT-TERM POLITICAL SUCCESS OR WHETHER HE HAS MISCAL-
CULATED, PERHAPS SERIOUSLY, ENDANGERING STABILITY AND
VIABILITY OF HIS GOVT AND OF PAKISTAN ITSELF. END SUMMARY

1. CONGEN KARACHI IS REPORTING BY SEPTTEL AUG 16 PRESS
CONFERENCE OF BALUCHISTAN CHIEF MINISTER ANNOUNCING
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ARRESTS OF NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY LEADERS IN THAT PROVINCE.

ARRESTS MARK THIRD PHASE OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (I.E., BHUTTO AND HIS PPP) EFFORT TO EXTEND ITS RULE INTO BALUCHISTAN PROVINCE AND CONCURRENTLY TO BREAK POWER OF PRINCIPAL TRIBAL CHIEFS.

2. RECAPITULATION OF PAST YEAR'S MANEUVERING FOLLOWS: AFTER SEVERAL STRATEGEMS WHICH BACKFIRED, (E.G., SO-CALLED 1972 LONDON PLAN WHEN BALUCH AND NAP LEADERS FROM FRONTIER WERE ACCUSED OF PLOTTING SECESSION), GOP CRANKED UP INCIDENTS IN LAS BELA DISTRICT BETWEEN TRIBE OF CURRENT BALUCH CHIEF MINISTER AND THEN EXISTING NAP PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT. DISCOVERY OF ARMS IN IRAQI EMBASSY HERE GAVE GOP PROPAGANDA WEAPON AGAINST NAP IN BOTH FRONTIER AND BALUCHISTAN. IN FEBRUARY, BHUTTO DISMISSED GOVERNOR BIZENJO AND CHIEF MINISTER MENGAL ON GROUNDS THEY HAD FAILED TO MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER. TRIBAL CHIEF BUGTI, LEADER OF ONE OF THREE LARGEST TRIBES (MENGAL AND MARRI ARE OTHER MAJOR TRIBES), WAS APPOINTED GOVERNOR. SECOND PHASE SAW DEPLOYMENT OF PAKISTAN ARMY AND PARA-MILITARY UNITS IN TRIBAL AREAS AGAINST LONG-STANDING TRADITION. THIS FOLLOWED BY SCATTERED INCIDENTS INVOLVING TRIBALS, PARTICULARLY OF MENGAL AND MARRI TRIBES, AND ARMY UNITS, EFFORTS BY BUGTI TO INDUCE DEFECTIONS FROM NAP/JUI COALITION MAJORITY IN PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY, POSTPONEMENT OF REGULAR ASSEMBLY MEETINGS, AND ULTIMATELY NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN BHUTTO AND NAP LEADERS SEEKING COMPROMISE. NEGOTIATIONS IN JUNE BROKE DOWN WHEN BHUTTO, AFTER INDICATING READINESS ACCEDE TO NAP DEMANDS TO REMOVE GOVERNOR BUGTI AND TO RESTORE NAP GOVERNMENT IN COALITION WITH SOME PPP MINISTERS, REFUSED TO IMPLEMENT THESE TWO MEASURES UNTIL AUGUST. NAP BALUCH LEADERS DECLINED TO ACCEPT BHUTTO'S DELAY AND QUIT TALKS. ARRESTS NOW MARK END OF PERIOD OF ATTEMPTED COMPROMISE, WHETHER REAL OR COSMETIC.

3. EMBASSY CAN ONLY SPECULATE AT THIS TIME WHY BHUTTO SHOULD HAVE ARRESTED WELL-KNOWN BALUCH FIGURES ONLY TWO DAYS AFTER ENTRY INTO FORCE OF NEW CONSTITUTION, ADVERTISED BY GOVERNMENT AS USHERING IN NEW ERA OF DEMOCRACY IN PAKISTAN. FOLLOWING CONSIDERATIONS MAY HAVE ENTERED CONFIDENTIAL

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INTO HIS THINKING:

(1) EXTERNAL FACTORS:

(A) AFGHANISTAN: RETURN OF DAUD TO POWER, WITH HIS WELL-KNOWN VIEWS OF AFGHAN PROPRIETARY INTERESTS NOT ONLY IN PAKISTANI PATHAN POPULATION BUT BALUCH AS WELL, MAY HAVE LED BHUTTO TO BELIEVE THAT CONTINUED

UNREST BY BALUCH TRIBES COULD LEND ITSELF TO EXPLOITATION BY AFGHANISTAN; BALUCH LEADERS MIGHT MEET POSITIVE RESPONSE SHOULD THEY APPROACH DAUD FOR ASSISTANCE IN THEIR CONTINUING STRUGGLE AGAINST FEDERAL PAKISTANI GOVERNMENT. (AMCONSUL PESHAWAR REPORTS SUCH TALK WIDESPREAD --SEE ISLAMABAD 6629)

(B) IRAN. NAP LEADER WALI KHAN HAS COMPLAINED THAT SHAH TOLD BHUTTO HE (SHAH) WOULD NOT PERMIT RETURN OF NAP TO POWER IN BALUCHISTAN. BHUTTO HAS NOT DENIED VERACITY WALI'S CHARGE. IRANIANS MAY HAVE BEEN URGING BHUTTO OVER MONTHS TO TAKE STRONG MEASURES TO CURB POWER OF NAP LEADERS IN BALUCHISTAN. IRAN MAY HAVE PROVIDED SOME ASSISTANCE TO PAKISTAN ARMY AND PARA-MILITARY UNITS IN THEIR RECENT OPERATIONS IN BALUCHISTAN. SEE KARACHI 1457 WHICH REPORTS IRANIAN CHINOOK HELICOPTERS IN BALUCHISTAN. MENGAL HAS ALSO CHARGED THAT IRANIAN TROOPS HAVE ASSISTED PAK FORCES ON PAK SIDE OF PAK/IRANIAN FRONTIER, CHARGES DENIED BY GOP.

(C) SOVIET UNION. GOP DISPOSITION TO STATE THAT SOVIETS ARE ENMESHED IN INTRIGUES OF PATHANS AND BALUCH REFLECTS INNATE SUSPICION THAT SOVIETS KEEPING HAND IN BALUCH SITUATION BEYOND ACQUIESCING IN RADIO BROADCASTS FROM IRAQ AND COUNTENANCING (IN PAK EYES) IRAQ SHIPMENT OF SOVIET-MADE ARMS FOR USE IN IRANIAN BALUCHISTAN. DAUD'S RETURN LIKELY TO HAVE ENHANCED PAK FEARS THAT SOVIETS, USING AFGHAN INTERMEDIARY, COULD EXPLOIT BALUCH UNREST TO SOVIET ADVANTAGE.

(2) INTERNAL FACTORS:

(A) BHUTTO: HANDLING OF BALUCHISTAN SITUATION
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SUGGESTS AGAIN THAT BHUTTO NOT PREPARED AT THIS TIME TO ACCEPT ANY MEANINGFUL OPPOSITION, I.E., ANY OPPOSITION WITH POWER TO CROSS HIS WILL. HADDITIONALLY DEEP PERSONAL MISTRUST AND EVEN HOSTILITY EXISTS BETWEEN MARRI/MENGAL AND BHUTTO, ALL OF WHOM ARE WELL KNOWN TO EACH OTHER. HIN TALKS WITH MISSION OFFICERS, MARRI/MENGAL HAVE MADE NO EFFORTS OVER PAST MONTHS TO HIDE THEIR DISDAIN FOR BHUTTO NOR THEIR CONVICTION THAT HE IS FLEDGLING DICTATOR IN PARLIAMENTARY DISGUISE.

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(B) PARLIAMENTARY TANGLE: STRENUOUS GOP EFFORTS TO CONSTRUCT PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY SUPPORTING PPP HAVE MET WITH MIXED SUCCESS AND ONLY AFTER RESORT TO CRUDE PRESSURE TACTICS OF BRIBERY AND COERCION. EMBASSY UNSURE OF EXACT PARLIAMENTARY SITUATION IN PROVINCE. BUT BHUTTO HAS YET TO PERMIT PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY TO MEET FOLLOWING OUSTER OF MENGAL GOVT, REFLECTING HIS UNWILLINGNESS TO PUT PRO-PPP STRENGTH TO A TEST BY VOTE. NAP LEADERS HAVE PUBLICLY DERIDED PPP TACTICS AS WHOLLY UN-DEMOCRATIC. NOW THE ARREST OF THREE OR MORE NAP PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY MEMBERS IN ADDITION TO ONE PREVIOUSLY UNDER ARREST) WILL GIVE PPP SUPPORTERS CLEAR MAJORITY IN ASSEMBLY.

(C) ARMY: EMBASSY HAS HEARD RUMORS THAT SOME IN ARMY UNHAPPY OVER PACIFICATION ROLE THEY HAVE BEEN CALLED ON TO PLAY IN BALUCHISTAN. IT NEVERTHELESS PROBABLE THAT SOMS ARMY LEADERS HAVE BEEN DISGRUNTLED OVER CONTINUED FREEDOM OF BALUCH LEADERS WHILE THEIR FOLLOWERS WERE TAKING POTSHOTS (SOME LETHAL) AT ARMY PERSONNEL.

(D) TIMING: AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, BOTH UNITED
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DEMOCRATIC FRONT AND NAP HAVE STATED THAT NO FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS WITH BHUTTO WILL BE CONDUCTED UNTIL HE AGREES TO RESTORE NAP/JUI GOVERNMENT IN BALUCHISTAN AND AGREES TO HONOR DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES. NAP AND UDF HAVE SET AUGUST 24 AS DATE ON WHICH ACTIVE CAMPAIGN AGAINST BHUTTO GOVERNMENT WILL BEGIN. WE SUSPECT BHUTTO HAD THIS DATE AND ULTIMATUM IN MIND IN MAKING ARRESTS, PLUS FACT THAT MAJORITY OF PERSONS IN PUNJAB, AND TO LESSER EXTENT IN SIND, ARE PREOCCUPIED WITH DEVASTATING FLOODS. ARRESTS WILL RECEIVE LESS IMMEDIATE ATTENTION THAN NORMALLY, BECAUSE OF FLOODS, AND ANY OPPOSITION POLITICIAN WHO ATTEMPTS TO TAKE TO STREETS IN PROTEST AGAINST ARRESTS MAY BE VULNERABLE TO ACCUSATIONS HE HAMPERING FLOOD RELIEF OR INDIFFERENT TO SUFFERING CAUSED BY FLOODS.

(E) SECESSIONISTS: THERE IS REASON TO BELIEVE THAT BHUTTO CONSIDERS (OR FEARS) NAP TO BE SECESSIONIST BY INCLINATION, AND THAT INDEPENDENT BALUCHISTAN AND PUKH-TOONISTAN IS SECRET GOAL OF VARIOUS NAP LEADERS.

4. BHUTTO HAS NOT BURNT ALL BRIDGES TO NAP IN BALUCHISTAN. ARRESTS WERE MADE BY PROVINCIAL NOT FEDERAL GOVT. AT SUBSEQUENT DATE, BHUTTO COULD INTERVENE TO RELEASE SOME OR ALL THOSE ARRESTED. ADDITIONALLY, WE NOTE BALUCHISTAN CABINET, ALONE OF FOUR PROVINCIAL CABINETS, HAS NOT YET BEEN CONSTITUTED. THIS LEAVES ROOM FOR BHUTTO TO PULL OFF ONE OF HIS NOT INFREQUENT SURPRISES. BUT RECENT ARRESTS SEEM TO END ANY EARLY POSSIBILITY OF FORMING BALUCH COALITION CABINET WITH MEANINGFUL NAP PARTICIPATION.

5. ON BROADER NATIONAL LEVEL, IMPLICATIONS ALSO NOT CLEAR. WE IDENTIFY THREE KEY UNANSWERED QUESTIONS: (A) WILL BALUCH TRIBES AFFECTED, AS WELL AS TRIBES ASSOCIATED WITH MENGALS, MARRIS AND BIZENJOS, RISE TO POSE SERIOUS INSURGENCY SITUATION IN BALUCHISTAN REQUIRING COUNTER-USE OF GREATER MILITARY FORCE? (B) WILL PATHAN WING OF NAP IN NORTH WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE REACT VIOLENTLY? (C) WILL AFGHAN GOVT UNDER DAUD INTERVENE BY PROVIDING ARMS AND FUNDS TO TRIBES IN BALUCHISTAN AND OR TO NAP SUPPORTERS IN FRONTIER? THESE
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QUESTIONS CONTAIN SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS NOT ONLY FOR IMMEDIATE FRONTIER REGIONS BUT FOR VERY FUTURE OF PAKISTAN BECAUSE OF DANGER THAT PROBLEMS COULD GET OUT OF HAND.

6. EMBASSY DOUBTS ARMY RECEPTIVE TO ANOTHER LONG-DRAWN OUT CAMPAIGN IN BALUCHISTAN SIMILAR TO THAT UNDERTAKEN BY AYUB IN 1962-63 FOR ESSENTIALLY SAME PURPOSE, I.E. EXTENSION

OF CENTRAL GOVT AUTHORITY IN BALUCHISTAN. ARMY RECEPTIVITY TO SUCH UNDERTAKING MIGHT INCREASE HOWEVER, IF CONFLICT GIVEN PATRIOTIC CAST SUCH AS FIGHT TO PRESERVE PAKISTAN AGAINST SECESSIONISTS OR EXTERNAL FORCES. INTERVENTION BY AFGHAN GOVT WOULD IN FACT FACILITATE BHUTTO BOVT SUCCESS IN ENSURING ARMY SUPPORT.

7. WE DO NOT NOW KNOW HOW WALI KHAN WILL REACT TO ARREST OF HIS COLLEAGUES, BUT MORE MILITANT IN NAP FRONTIER PROBABLY WILL PRESS HIM TO TAKE STRONG STAND. WALI AND HIS PRINCIPAL SUPPORTERS HAVE IN PAST SHOWN LITTLE DISPOSITION TO PROVIDE CENTRAL GOVT ANY PRETEXT TO SUPPRESS THEIR ACTIVITIES. WALI HAS SHOWN NO DISPOSITION TO WANT TO RETURN TO JAIL. (BHUTTO RELEASED HIM FROM DETENTION IN ONE OF HIS FIRST PRESIDENTIAL ACTS.) HIS SUPPORTERS ARE LARGELY DRAWN FROM MIDDLE CLASS IN SETTLED (NOT TRIBAL AREAS) OF FRONTIER, AND THEY MAY VERY WELL COUNSEL MODERATION ON WALI.

8. WE SHALL HAVE TO SEE HOW ACTIONS AGAINST NAP LEADERS WILL AFFECT POLITICAL SCENE OUTSIDE BALUCHISTAN AND NWFP. LEADERS OF SOME OTHER OPPOSITION PARTIES, WEAK AS MOTS ARE, MAY CONCLUDE THAT EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY MEANS PROVIDE ONLY WAY TO CURB WHAT THEY SEE AS BHUTTO'S MARCH TOWARDS ONE-MAN RULE. IF THEY MOVE TO VIOLENCE, THAT WILL IN TURN PROVIDE BHUTTO WITH EXCUSE (OR REASON) TO EXTEND CENTRAL GOVT'S REPRESSIVE MEASURES. THIS COULD SET STAGE FOR CYCLE OF VIOLENCE THAT MIGHT SPIRAL HIGHER THAN ANYONE WANTED.

9. WE ARE NOT REPEAT NOT PREDICTING ABOVE COURSE OF EVENTS BUT BELIEVE THAT RECENT NAP ARRESTS, PARTICULARLY AS THEY COINCIDE WITH NEW SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN HAVE IMPLICATIONS WHICH GO FAR BEYOND TRIBAL/BHUTTO STRUGGLE IN BALUCHISTAN.
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